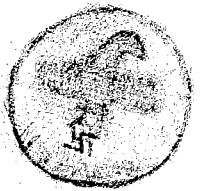


Nijole Paulauskaitė  
Daruniskis, Lithuania



Dear Nijole,

I regret to inform you that due to the rapid advancement of the Nazi Germans into Kaunas and the remaining municipalities of Lithuania, my father has come to the conclusion that it was beneficial for our family to vacate our farmstead in Darsuniskis and take refuge in another country. He instructed us to pack all of our belongings in the meager suitcases we possessed and departed at the crack of dawn. Journeying to the station was one of the most frightening and disturbing expeditions that I have ever partaken in over the course of my life. The constant gunfire and other deafening explosions were present for the duration of our trek. There were also carcasses of farm animals in some of the fields we bypassed that were killed due to dropped bombs; many of the corpses looked butchered for meat. When we were approaching the train station in Kaunas, we were halted by two Nazi soldiers. It was with good fortune that my father was fluent in the German language and could explain to the officers what our travel plans entailed. I sensed that they were still suspicious of us as they asked for our papers. They then proceeded to look through our cart as if they were trying to find something or even someone. They eventually let us continue on our journey.

After our ordeal with the soldiers, we reached the city and boarded the jet black passenger train that was billowing with thick dark smoke. The size of the train was intimidating since I have not witnessed anything other than what surrounds our farm. My ears are still ringing and my heart pounding from all of the loud noises and graphic images that will scar me for life. It was very unfortunate that we had to leave on such short notice, and I did not even get to properly say goodbye to you or anyone else I held dear in my heart. My father was able to clarify some of the details regarding our travel plans while we were seated on the train. He stated that one of his closest friends disclosed some confidential information regarding the imminent invasion of Lithuania by the Nazis who were to bring terror and hardship to all of the citizens, even though they were supposed to be viewed as saviors that would liberate them from the Soviets. He urged my father to take his family out of the country and to travel to a rural suburb of Brandenburg, Germany, where his brother was willing to support us for the duration of the war and give us a reasonably safe place to stay. I hope that the rest of our journey will be uneventful and that we will be able to outlast this grueling period in time.

The war nauseates me and I have acquired a very profound detestation for it. I cannot wait for it to be over so that I can return to my homeland to visit you, Nijole, and all of my other classmates. I believe that since this awful war has begun, it has only resulted in the loss of far too many lives, broken too many hearts, and left an entire continent in economic ruin. No one can afford to even put food on the table for their families and are struggling to get by each and every day. As a result, all of us are starving, including my own family. To make the situation worse, our crops have been failing this year, and we are forced to scour piles of waste left by our neighbours to retrieve any edible items that have been carelessly thrown away like potato peels and other food scraps. The past few months have been very challenging for us, and I have been experiencing things that I believe no other fourteen year old should.

Promise me that you'll be careful when I'm not around. I recently overheard my mother talking about a troupe called the Lithuanian Selbstschutz who is traversing the towns along with the countryside and mobilizing all of the Jewish people who reside there. I don't know where they are transporting them to, but by listening to all of the broadcasts that have been on the radio lately, I doubt it's anywhere good. I hate how my father keeps uttering all of these appalling phrases about the Jews. It's like he, and everyone else, is trying to brainwash me with subliminal hate messages. I wholeheartedly disagree with them and I believe that the Jewish people are all very courteous individuals in contrast to how they are portrayed as rats and other horrid things. You're Jewish and I do not see how it's possible for anyone to get that impression, so I do not know what he or any other people are talking about. Anyways, I hope that you and your family stay safe and that I am able to see you soon!

Sincerely,

